

Impact of Covid

Common Challenges

Impact on Mental Health and Wellbeing

During the pandemic

The pandemic exerted a significant psychological stress on some children and families. It has been well evidenced how this has impacted on [older children](#), however, the impact on the mental health and wellbeing of babies and young children has been given less focus. Reasons for this may be a combination of a lack of understanding of the different ways that babies and young children express their distress, an assumption that babies and young children do not have a voice that can be easily listened to, and an unconscious bias that the life of babies and young children was not as disrupted as that of school-aged children.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the opposite is true: the pandemic occurred at a developmentally foundational stage for babies and young children, vastly changing early experiences with potentially profound and long-term impact.

Where there were additional risk factors such as financial insecurity, pre-existing disability, physical or mental health issues, social isolation, inadequate housing and digital exclusion, the impact on mental health and wellbeing was significantly greater.

Various studies showed that new mothers experienced a significant increase in anxiety and depression during the pandemic (Brown 2021) and the suspension of playgroups and local classes contributed to parental loneliness which increased from [38% pre-pandemic to 63%](#) in the following years. Parents experiencing low income are twice as likely to say they feel lonely. Far more families living on low incomes felt that [the pandemic impacted on their mental health](#) compared to wealthier families.

Ongoing impact

There is evidence that there is an ongoing impact on young children's emotional wellbeing and development (Hogg 2022). Where poor wellbeing is experienced at a young age, this increases the risk of poorer mental and physical health in the long term, as well as impacting on academic achievement, and future opportunities.

